WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1/ A method of manufacturing a bituminous coated aggregate mix comprising aggregate coated with bitumen, said aggregate itself comprising fine particles and chippings, said method comprising at least the following steps:

(a) at least some of the aggregate is dried by heating;

(b) an intermediate mix is formed by coating a first portion of the aggregate that has substantially no fines with hot bitumen; and

(c) a second portion of the aggregate that comprises sand and fines is mixed with the intermediate mix obtained at step (b);

wherein, during step (a), only said first portion of the aggregate is heated, and wherein, during step (c), the second portion of the aggregate that is mixed with the intermediate mix, is constituted by wet aggregate.

2/ A method according to claim 1, in which, during step (a), the first portion of the aggregate is heated to a temperature of not less than 100°C.

3/ A method according to claim 1, in which, during step (c), the second portion of the aggregate, which is mixed with the intermediate mix, is constituted by aggregate at ambient temperature.

4/ A method according to claim 1, in which the first portion of the aggregate comprises chippings, whereas the second portion of the aggregate comprises sand and fines only.

5/ A method according to claim 1, in which the first portion of the aggregate further comprises sand having a particle size greater than 2 mm.

6/ A method according to claim 1, in which the second portion of the aggregate represents in the range 15% by weight of the aggregate to 75% by weight of the aggregate.

7/ A method according to claim 1, in which the second portion of the aggregate has a water content lying in the range 2% by weight to 5% by weight, and preferably about 3.5% by weight, before it is mixed with said intermediate mix.

8/ A method according to claim 1, in which, during step (a), the first portion of the aggregate is heated to a temperature lying in the range 100°C to 160°C, and preferably in the range 110°C to 130°C, and said temperature is such that, after step (c), the coated aggregate mix is at a temperature lying in the range 60°C to 100°C.

9/ A method according to claim 8, in which, during step (c), a quantity of water is added to the mix, which quantity of water is sufficient for said water to vaporize in part, and to cause the bitumen to expand.

10/ A method according to claim 1, in which, during step (c), a quantity of water is added to the mix, which quantity of water is sufficient for water to remain in the bituminous coated aggregate mix after step (c).

11/ A method according to claim 1, in which, during step (a), the first portion of the aggregate is heated to a temperature lying in the range 180°C to 220°C, and preferably about 200°C, and said temperature of the first portion of the aggregate is such that, after step (c), the coated aggregate mix is at a temperature lying in the range 100°C to 150°C, and preferably about 130°C.

12/ A method according to claim 1, in which all of the bitumen that enters into the composition of the bituminous coated aggregate mix is added to the mix during step (b).